

I Just Focused on Doing Anything and Everything to Get My Child Back



Father and Daughter. Parris and Pae'shanz pose with her graduation promotion certificate.

After resolving prior legal issues and working closely with DCF for about a year, Parris T. was reunified with his daughter, Pae'shanz, in January 2025. The two celebrated Father's Day this June which also marks National Reunification Month.

Reflecting on the circumstances that led to his daughter's removal, Parris shared, "It was an eye-opener because I have somebody who really depends on me. I think I've always been a good father, but that really woke me up."

"Something just happened within me. From the day [Pae'shanz was removed by DCF], I just focused on doing anything and everything to get my child back."

Although Pae'shanz was not living with him during that time, Parris remained a steady presence in her life—visiting her nearly every day through a kinship placement with Parris' sister, supporting her athletics, and committed to bringing her home.

"We were so close, and we stayed close, going through this situation. So nothing really changed when she got back home. I felt like I had to keep it normal for her. Nobody really wants to dwell on the past," said Parris.

DCF social worker, Nicole Walker, was assigned to Parris' case and said it took no convincing for him to own responsibility for the actions that led him to be involved with DCF.

"What I noticed about Parris, from the very beginning, was he took accountability for his actions from day one. Parris was very cooperative with the department the entire time. He did every recommendation that we and the court asked of him."

Nicole said it was also apparent how much Parris loves his daughter by how present he stayed in her life even during separation.

"Parris has a great relationship with Pae'shanz. Together, they're a trip. They crack jokes, they openly talk about things. He didn't like not being able to see her on a daily basis."

She said Parris' visits with Pae'shanz at the Quality Parenting Center were not enough for him. Because he was doing so well in his programs and services through DCF, Parris got approval for daily visits to his sister's house.

"[Parris' sister] reported that he would come over for dinners, he would come over to play basketball with her. He never missed any of her games. He's really big on supporting her with her sports and that was really good for their family."

Parris has a Commercial Driver's License allowing him to operate heavy, large, or hazardous material vehicles and trucks. Nicole said most CDL operators accept long-haul jobs when they first start out because those jobs are "easier" to acquire than local jobs. He refused to settle for that because he did not want to take that time away from Pae'shanz and her younger sister.



Regardless of being five minutes away at her aunt's house, Parris and Pae'shanz still missed each other greatly. While Parris said having Pae'shanz placed with his sister was definitely helpful, he still had to talk his daughter through those tough moments of separation anxiety.

"Sometimes I had to just tell my daughter 'you have to listen to what [your aunt] says right now.' This is what we have to do, it's temporary. It was frustrating at times, but we all got past it. My sister helped her out a lot, with schoolwork, everything, and they got along well. I'm thankful to her for that, honestly."

Parris said Pae'shanz, age fourteen, could be closed off emotionally at times - a "box." He said that time spent with her aunt, and to this day, she has begun to express herself more.

"She probably talks too much now but you're going to have to take the good with the bad," Parris joked. "Going through this whole situation, I like that she's starting to open up more."

Parris said he was also grateful to have Nicole's guidance during this journey. Nicole's emphasis on meeting Parris, as a single father, "where he was" in life made a difference. He felt heard.

"It's hard being a single father. And it's especially hard because I'm raising a girl, a teenager now, and it's rough sometimes."

"[Nicole] was wonderful. I just had to let her know, I had custody of my daughter. I've had custody of my daughter, and I've been taking care of her by myself with no help. I had to play both roles. There wasn't any type of program to help single fathers. I let Nicole know that and she helped me out, guided me to the places and people that could help."

Nicole understood where Parris was coming from.

"I agree sometimes fathers don't get the credit or recognition they deserve. I think people usually just always focus on moms, even in visits - 'if mom's there, then that's enough.' That makes fathers feel they're not important but they definitely are important in their child's life.

"[DCF's] fatherhood engagement program is important because it just reminds fathers that there's other fathers out there who they can relate to. Like Parris, hearing other fathers going through the same thing, sharing stories, and to be like, 'I didn't know so many people are going through what I'm go through and feel what I'm feeling.'"



For her part, Nicole said it was a pleasure working with Parris, "He was honest. He was cooperative. We had a great working relationship."

"He was fully engaged in the fatherhood services. He even attended a few meetings after he had already completed the program because he liked the conversations he had there with the other men."

During fatherhood support sessions, Nicole said Parris was always 'present' and even opened up about his situation. She said he was a success in the program because he not only enjoyed it but took away lessons and guidance to apply to his own life.

"One thing that I noticed [being involved with the fatherhood engagement services] is that I think I'm a good father, but I could always be a better father," said Parris.

One of those fatherhood engagement services was a support group at The Village for Families and Children.

"At the beginning, I never thought I would have made through, I used to get very frustrated. I remember one time I went to this 'guys talk,' and someone said don't give up, you just can't give up."

Parris adopted that mantra, "Keep going. Life is frustrating sometimes, but once you give up, you're basically giving up on your child. So, I just always kept that in the back of my head."

Remaining actively involved in Pae'shanz's life no matter what - showing up for her athletics, supporting her interests, or just hanging out as she opens up to him - helped build meaningful memories and create a stronger bond during that tough period of separation.

Parris said these moments of presence between parent and child really make a difference, "As long as you stay active in your child's life, they will always remember it. Good memories."